



Foods Work

Doing what comes naturally on Haida Gwaii

Our Work with Food

Five years ago Daniel Schulbeck (the Math and Science guy) and Derek Seifert (the English and Socials guy) discovered common ground in a shared passion for food. We spent a lot of time together learning to hunt, to fish, to dig clams; activities that the Haida have been doing on the island for millennia. We spent much of that time talking about the foods work we could do at the school; our learning informed our teaching.

This book is our way of sharing the work we have enjoyed doing, work that places us in a long line of local educators who have recognized that local resources are the richest learning tools we've got. People have been doing good things here for a long time. It is our hope that this book might encourage others to find ways to become culturally responsive, and to share their work too. One of the lessons we have learned is that there are many ways to be a good educator, through interactions with each other and respecting and learning from the diversity in our community we all get better.

The success we have had with our collaborative work over the years is the success of others, those who made it possible, and those who told us what to do. Naani Charlotte told us we should do more foods work, so we do.

Outdoor Classroom

The coming of the 2009/10 school year provided us with the impetus to increase our collaborative efforts; we knew we would both be spending a lot of time with the same group of students and we knew that we wanted to focus on experiential learning. We set to work to come up with activities that could support a group of hands on learners, and the Outdoor Classroom was born.

The 'Classroom' started with an unused courtyard that served as our workspace. A path was built, beds were erected and planted, a tent was raised, composting began, and our students won a B.C. Green Games award with their slide show presentation. The following year the school partnered with Farm to School, and three years later the outdoor classroom has become a new greenhouse, expanded gardens, a smokehouse, clam digging shovels, and a renewed commitment to focusing on place based learning.





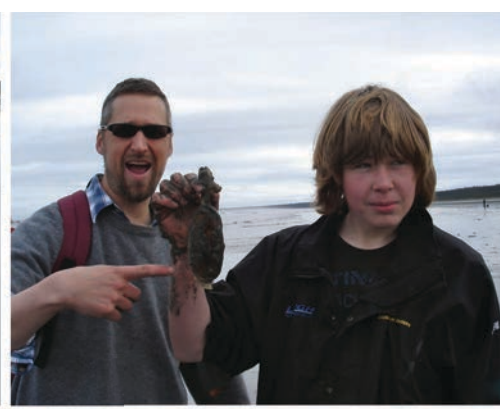
Clam Digging

Place based education on Haida Gwaii means going to the beach to tap into the most inspirational of settings. A coastal expression has it that “When the tide is out, the table is set”. So we go to the beach, to eat from the table where stories tell the first humans emerged on Haida Gwaii.

A trip to the beach comes with traditional stories, lessons on clam biology (how does a clam reproduce?), lessons on the tides, and more; all in an atmosphere that fosters relationships and connects students to the natural world.

Clam digging connects us to the past too, students are participating in local culture and they have the chance to teach us. Most of my modest skills as a digger have been learned from students whose teachings have brought me a long way from my first sad attempts to pull clams from the beach using a garden trowel.





Deer Hunting

Deer has become a big part of island menus. After our first year of collaborative work we decided it was time to start working on deer and the following fall we went on our first hunting trip with students. We forgot to bring a camera that year, we learn too. We have now taken a few trips and lots of deer have been processed, prepared, consumed, and appreciated.

Learning from where we are and embracing local culture makes what we do relevant to our students. When we forget our preconceptions about what a Home Economics course should be we open up the possibility of a new Home Ec. course, one informed by place.

I made Wacky Cake in Home Economics, our students are butchering deer and preparing venison dishes. Students are learning about introduced species, they are learning biology in an authentic manner, and they are learning to eat a healthy local diet.







Yakoun Fishing

Fish sustains life on Haida Gwaii. Fishing is a way of life, it feeds the local economy, and feeds locals.

A field trip to a fish camp is a trip into the heart of a living culture, the pages of a Social Studies textbook come alive not with pictures depicting how it was once done, but with immersion in the culture of today, a culture that owes much to the past but also one that is living, one that continues today and will continue tomorrow.

When we work on fish in the school we build a bridge to that lived culture, we live it ourselves as we work on fish, cutting, canning, smoking, and sharing fish.



District Day

When it came to our turn to host District Day our natural choice of focus was local foods. The day confirmed for us some things we already knew; the way food brings people together, the joy that working on foods brings, and the pride it gives to students who are able to share their knowledge. Our day was a celebration of local foods, there were berry pickers, chowder makers, greenhouse workers, fish canners, deer butchers, and most importantly the sharing of those foods. The day brought together students (who helped in their areas of expertise), community members, and staff. We learned, we laughed, and we enjoyed the bounty of our local foods together.

Workshops offered

- Salmon Processing – Canning and Drying
- Greenhouse/Gardening in schools
- Berry Picking – Muffin Baking in afternoon
- Cedar Weaving
- Soups with Local Foods
- Deer Processing
- Treasure Chest (traditional objects used in food gathering)
- Outdoor Cooking
- Focus groups to plan lessons and implementation of ideas







Field School Day

This year will mark our fifth annual Field School day at GMD. The day is built by staff and has over the years become a celebration of the year that was. As the day has evolved food has played an ever-increasing role. Digging for clams, cooking fish and clams by fire, or digging a hole in the beach to do a traditional pit cooking session, food is a great motivator to get outside more often and take advantage of what our surroundings have to offer.

Field School Day offers a wide variety of curriculum connected learning. Students have learned about outdoor recreation opportunities, participated in the science of rivers, oceans, and earth, visited old village sites, and learned to cook lunch outside, but more than that Field School Day is a day for the school community to enjoy each other's company.



Gin Tl'aatsaanaay - The Garden House

In the midst of all this food work our local nutritionist facilitated a collaboration with the provincial Farm 2 School program. The program seeks to link schools with local farmers but they also supported the concept of school as food producer. We shared with them some of the things we were doing and they provided the financial assistance to help us make our greenhouse dreams a reality. Along with a Growing Innovations grant from the Rural Teacher Education program through UBC we had the working capital to buy the basic supplies needed to get students digging around in the soil.

What it Cost:

The cost of the greenhouse (\$5,000) was generously contributed by the Farm 2 School Program. Of equal value were the services willingly volunteered to support the raising of Gin Tl'aatsaanaay. With help from local businesses, North Arm Transportation, the Village of Masset, the Maintenance Staff, and the students of GMD, we had the greenhouse up and growing it's first crop quicker than we would have thought possible. The \$9000 in Growing Innovations grants with their no-strings attached status has allowed us to maintain a working capital which is 'on-hand' for those small day-to-day expenses and for times when opportunity comes knocking. A prime example was the purchase of our smoke house which couldn't have happened without these readily available funds.



Raised beds were made by half-lapping recycled wharf ties and pinning them with rebar cut into 18" lengths. Six inches of seaweed and compost were placed in the bottom of the bed and then covered with screened topsoil. Careful consideration with respect to access and functionality was made before bed size and placement were set. The fellows in the Maintenance Department were invaluable in helping set up running water, electricity, and thermostat controlled ventilation.



GIN TL'AATSAANAAY
GARDEN HOUSE





Getting into the Swing

Part of our Outdoor Classroom involved the construction of compost bins so we could contribute to the richness of our soil. Over one hundred kilos of discarded produce from the Co-op every week and bags of shredded paper from local offices needed industrial sized compost bins: a valuable construction project for learning tacit skills.

Classes from Tahayghan elementary school are hosted for lessons in composting, seeding, harvesting and other social learning opportunities. The Big Buddy/Little Buddy system offers an opportunity for the high school students to step into a mentorship role.





The elementary students also experience the attention of their Big Buddies and have their first positive experiences in the high school.

Greenhouse - A Place to Go

The greenhouse has added a classroom to our school. In the greenhouse we can do things we can't do in other classes, and we can do things in a context that brings purpose and a change of scenery.

Class Uses of Greenhouse (so far)

Art – drawing, photography

English – writing (poems, figurative writing, writes inspired by place)

French – plant a soup garden 'en Francais'

Math – measurement, conversions, geometry, applied math, ratio, scale drawing, graphing.

Science – modes of reproduction, nutrient cycles, botany, microscopy, spider biology, acids & bases, soil science.

Social Studies – First Nation studies (plant a three sisters garden)

Home Economics – growing, gathering, preparing & enjoying healthy local food, issues involving food security.





The greenhouse lets us get outside and use our hands while learning about important things like how a lever works, and how to safely use power tools.

A Home Economics Course

Over the years, we have been fortunate to acquire simple and practical resources and develop food related activities along side our students. We were given the opportunity to string them all together in the form of full year course. Class size and scheduling variations make every year a new one but here are the broad strokes of an outline.

Term 1

- Big Buddy/Little Buddy harvesting
- Processing of produce (canning, drying, freezing)
- Collect salmon
- Pick berries and mushrooms

Term 2

- Harvest and process deer
- Collect seaweed and fall leaves for compost and mulch
- Theory behind soil, water and air quality
- Research plants
- Theory of sustainability / food security

Term 3

- Start seedlings indoors under grow lights
- Greenhouse preparation and plant greens (can be intergrade as well)
- Independent project work
- Construction projects

Term 4

- Clam digging
- Plant sale to raise money to pay for student summer jobs maintaining the greenhouse
- Fishing field trip
- Plant outdoor beds





The fall is an exciting time. School has begun again, the garden beds are bursting with hidden and not so hidden bounty. It is a time for carrots. You can never plant enough carrots!

The high school connects with the elementary schools and Big Buddies find a connection with Little Buddies. These cross age explorations help both parties see things in a different light and form lasting impressions of a school experience.

Late Coho and Chum salmon runs should not be forgotten as whole fish in the freezer means material to smoke and can later in the year.





When the storms and rain settle in it is a great time to harvest deer and study the theory behind all the things that support growing things: the wind and rain and land the bright and shining sun and the gardener's tending hand.



In the months around February, there is time to study different plants, research or build individual projects. Seedlings for the coming year and to fill the spring plant sale orders are started indoors. Some crops can already be started in the greenhouse.



The spring is a time for field trips, Short, walking trips for the elementary school to work with their Big Buddies or ones that go farther afield to harvest clams and sockeye... the return of the good weather must be celebrated.



Regardless of what you teach curriculum connections to foods work are not hard to find, but what makes foods work truly successful is it's social component. Working on foods gives us an opportunity to build relationships, to enjoy each others company, to have fun and learn while engaging in island culture together.





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